

Utilizing WhatsApp Application in English Language Learning Classroom

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Abstract

WhatsApp (WA) is one of the most popular messaging applications which can be accessed by using a mobile phone and Personal Computer (PC). Nowadays, most people prefer to use this application to communicate with others. In the education field, WhatsApp also gives beneficial features such as text, call, send video, audio, links, location, document, and pictures. This research is aimed at observing WA, which is tailored to support English Language Learning (ELL) activities. For gathering data, this study applied a case study using observation and questionnaire as the main instrument. A case study is drawn from participants of 5th semester students at English Department Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika. It is found that WA was significant in helping ELL activities since it was used by both teachers and students for ELL related activities. The results are: 1) In the field of technical advantages, WA provides simple operation; 2) WA can enhance learning opportunities outside the classroom for students. In brief, WA facilitated ELL activities as an effort toward MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) implementation.

Keywords: WhatsApp, English Language Learning, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, Mobile Phone Technology.

Introduction

These days, the education system is developing rapidly and technology has invaded all aspects of life. No one can deny that this generation we teach nowadays is the generation of technology; whatever we do, we cannot stop them from using technology (Wai, Chu, Wai, & Lam, 2015). Mobile devices come up with applications to help people with their lives, and it happens to change the way people learn as well as it changes their lives. People can use mobile devices to access educational resources, connect with others, or create content, both inside and outside classrooms (UNESCO, 2013). Some many applications or sites can be used by learners to facilitate their learning activities. With the mobility, availability and flexibility of these devices, students can learn at any time and any place (Ahmed El Hariry, 2015) or in other words, the students also are able to learn outside the classroom whenever and wherever they want (Ayuningtyas, 2018).

Technology, for instance, personal computer, mobile phone and the internet are considered as effective tools to support the teaching and learning process. The technological advances have had such a great impact on the field of education especially in learning English as a foreign language (Zam Zam Al Arif, 2019). But, in fact, most teachers have not utilized the technology optimally yet in teaching the English language. While learning in the classroom no longer plays a central role in the learning process of English (Rahman, Ali Wira; Patintingan, Amir; Indahyanti, 2018), they prefer to choose traditional ways to teach the English language.

There are two main obstacles encountered in utilizing technology in ELL in Indonesia. The first obstacle is large classes where students and teachers are not directly proportional. As expressed by experts that teaching large classes interactively has always been posing great challenges to language teachers in many of the developing countries (W. Mwakapina, S. Mhandeni, & S. Nyinondi, 2016). In this case, sometime, a teacher should teach for more than 50 students in one class with various abilities and characteristics. As a result, the process of teaching activities is less conducive. Consequently, there should be an extra space for the students outside class to develop what they get from the classroom. The second obstacle comes from the teachers themselves. Lack of technological mastery by mostly teachers will reduce the quality of the teaching process. When teachers effectively integrate mobile learning technologies in their teaching, they can create engaging learning environments, especially as today students have already adopted mobile phones in their lives and use it increasingly for social interaction (Khaled Abdel Jaleel Dweikat, 2019).

One of the technological tools that have been so influential among the teacher and their students is WhatsApp (W. Mwakapina et al., 2016). Since the internet facility is required for using WhatsApp, lots of information can also be accessed in real-time, and sharing that information through technology is both instantaneous and convenience (Gon & Rawekar, 2017). Teachers can create a group for their students that constitute a type of “simple social network” for the class. As of today, it seems that WhatsApp has advantages over other technological tools employed by the education system, such as low cost, simplicity, accessibility, efficiency, and natural language (Gon & Rawekar, 2017). A study examined WA was used by students to support ELL activities. WA helped provide a communication platform, nurture community sense and maintaining communication atmosphere among students and teachers. (Yudhiantara, Hasanah, & Ruswandi, 2018)

Language learning has witnessed dramatic changes over the past few years in different senses. In addition to student-oriented learning and self-learning experience with computers, mobile e-learning has also become very common in every corner of the world (Wai et al., 2015).

Method

This study applied case study and observation. The participant of this research is the learners from 5th semester English Department of Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika. There were 57 female and 43 male students. The instrument used for this study is a questionnaire based on the students' perception of the use of WhatsApp in English Language Learning (ELL). In the observation part, it observed how WhatsApp was used by both the teacher and students throughout English Language Learning (ELL). The data gathered were described and analysed

to achieve the objective of the study. The five levels of students and teacher opinion used in the questionnaire were ranked as the highest level, high level, moderate level, low level and lowest level. Data from participants were analyzed and calculated statistically. To show how reliable this research is, this study uses Cronbach's Alpha calculations. Data analysis from the questionnaire presented in the form of a rating scale. These rating scales were calculated to find out mean and standard deviation. Then, it is translated based on criteria by (Best, 1981) as follows:

1. $1.00 \leq \bar{x} < 1.50$ refers to the students had the lowest level.
2. $1.51 \leq \bar{x} < 2.50$ refers to the students had the low level.
3. $2.51 \leq \bar{x} < 3.50$ refers to the students had the moderate level.
4. $3.51 \leq \bar{x} < 4.50$ refers to the students had the high level.
5. $4.51 \leq \bar{x} < 5.50$ refers to the students had the highest level.

The statistic used for analysing the data was mean and standard deviation which analysed using a computer program.

Findings and Discussion

This study aimed at observing how WhatsApp can support English Language Learning (ELL) activities. To achieve these objectives, the quantitative results will be presented. Firstly, the quantitative data were analysed in accordance with the aim of the study questions as follows:

Results related to the technical advantages of using WA and how WA can enhance learning opportunities outside the classroom. What are the perceptions of EFL students towards WhatsApp in ELL? To answer this question, means and standard deviations were used and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table.1
Results of EFL Students' Perception towards WhatsApp in English Language Learning

Rank	No.	Items	\bar{x}	S.D	Level
1.	3.	WhatsApp enables me to communicate with the teacher every time and everywhere.	4.58	0.61	Highest
2.	8.	WhatsApp is very suitable for ELL.	4.55	0.67	Highest
3.	1.	WhatsApp allows me to send and receive texts, images, audio, video and documents.	4.54	0.57	Highest
4.	9.	WhatsApp is a good e-learning platform, especially for learning English.	4.53	0.79	Highest
5.	7.	The use of WhatsApp can create interactive ELL.	4.51	0.69	Highest
6.	5.	WhatsApp enables me to engage with teacher and classmates academically anytime and	4.47	0.68	High

		anyplace.			
7.	10.	WhatsApp allows me to reach authentic English material whenever I need.	4.38	0.74	High
8.	6.	WhatsApp enables me to get immediate feedback from teacher.	4.32	0.62	High
9.	2.	WhatsApp encourages me to spend more time learning English.	4.27	0.62	High
10.	4.	WhatsApp enables me to connect to English learning material directly.	4.19	0.71	High
Total			4.43	0.67	High

The table.1 above presented that the total degree of students' perception of WhatsApp in ELL was high ($\bar{x} = 4.43$). The highest level was given to item No. 3 "WhatsApp enables me to communicate with the teacher every time and everywhere" ($\bar{x} = 4.58$), followed by item No. 8 "WhatsApp is very suitable for ELL" ($\bar{x} = 4.55$). However, the lowest rank is item No. 4 "WhatsApp enables me to connect to English learning material directly" ($\bar{x} = 4.19$). The quantitative data analysis above suggests a high level of positive perception of using WA after experiencing and utilizing its potential in the class. The overall responses prove that WA utilizes impact the students' awareness of the advantages of this application in ELL. This might be due to the fact that students are able to communicate with the teacher every time and everywhere for educational purposes.

As shown in Table.1, the highest means were items No. 1, 3, 7, 8 and 9. Those high means (\bar{x}) indicate that the students' admit that WA was useful for ELL activities. It provides many features to support the learning process for sharing information such as to send and receive texts, images, audios, videos and documents to the teacher and their classmates. In addition, WhatsApp can create an interactive ELL environment by easiness interaction both in visual and verbal.

Conclusion

Based on the quantitative results of this study, it revealed that WhatsApp provided easier and faster communication between teachers and students for academic purposes. It allowed students to share and exchange information through the features of WhatsApp, for example, images, audios, videos and many more. Another benefit of utilizing WA is how it also helped the students to recognize e-learning activities actively.

In light of the study results, below are the advantages and disadvantages of using WhatsApp as an experience to share.

Advantages of Using WhatsApp (Experience to Share)

1. WhatsApp is the alternative for engaging e-learning classes.
2. It facilitates students in motivating students to learn English, especially in writing skills.
3. It helps students to overcome their fear of using the language through sharing information and discussion.

4. It helps the students to believe in their abilities and to have confidence.
5. It enables students to learn from their colleagues' mistakes.

Disadvantages of Using WhatsApp (Experience to Share)

1. Need extra time to prepare the material.
2. Some students as a silent reader and do not participate in the discussion.
3. Copy and paste of the tasks often occur, the teacher should be careful about this.
4. Lack of students' attention of the material given from the teacher. It means not all students learn from the materials.
5. The instructor must always be cautious and patient to control the group

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